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MAYNARD'S
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WORDS OF LINCOLN

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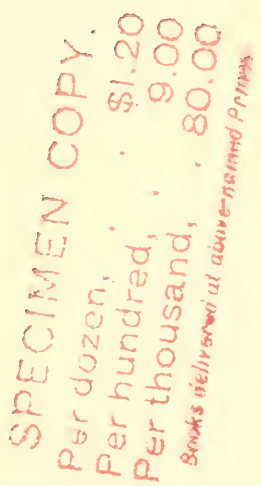
WORDS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



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PREFACE

THE object of this little collection of the "Words of Abraham Lincoln" is twofold—to lead to a better appreciation of the strength and beauty of his character and to inspire a deeper and more abiding love for the country for whose preservation he gave his life.

No man has ever lived in America whose life has been more closely identified with the common people, and who yet has been more grandly influential in shaping the affairs of the nation. In the most critical period of her existence he saved her from calamity and ruin. His hand removed the foul stain of slavery, and made the Stars and Stripes in very truth the flag of the free.

It seems a marvel, even here in America, that a poor, ignorant boy could aspire to the highest honor within the gift of the people; but more marvelous still, that a country lawyer could grapple with the tremendous problems which had baffled the wisdom and skill of America's greatest statesmen for almost half a century, and solve them successfully. Wholly unskilled in war, he conducted the greatest war of modern times and brought it to a successful issue. With unerring judgment he found the correct solution of the most involved problems of law, finance, and diplomacy.

It is inconceivable that a man's life could suddenly expand from the narrow round of private life to comprehend all the varied and tremendous responsibilities of this high position without previous preparation. Daniel Webster, on the night before his "Reply to Hayne," when asked why he was not making preparation for this the greatest event of his life, replied, that for twenty years he had been preparing for it;

that all the thought and activity of a lifetime had been so directed as to fit him for this supreme moment. And the same is true in regard to Lincoln. A mere glance at his life will show that every line of development, as if directed by a master hand, led straight on to the Presidential chair. Unquestionably his whole previous life was a preparation for his last four years, and when the crisis came he needed no further preparation : he was ready.

It will be a mistake to attempt to teach the following selections as literature. They are not all masterpieces ; and some of them can hardly be called contributions to literature. But they have a deeper significance and a higher mission. They are the exponents of a character and the mirror of a life. They should be studied to reveal the soul of the man who wrote them, and to teach lessons of purity, simplicity, devotion to duty, and high fidelity. In them, too, should be read a chapter of the nation's history, the culmination of its former life, the foundation of its future and grander activities. And, above, all they should conduce to form a higher and purer type of patriotism, of which their author was a shining example.

INTRODUCTION

THE life of Abraham Lincoln covers the most important period in American history. From the foundation of the Republic foreign critics had been wont to predict its downfall, and even its friends feared that it might not stand the test of internal dissensions. The violent passions and bitter hostility which arose out of the conflict over the slavery issue finally brought on the great War of the Rebellion, which was destined to test to the uttermost the stability of American institutions. To Abraham Lincoln, more than to any other man in this crisis, is due the preservation of the Government and the establishment of the American Commonwealth upon a firmer basis than ever before.

He was emphatically a man of the people. He was born in poverty and ignorance, and his early life was spent in the cabin of the pioneer. An ordinary man could scarce have raised himself, in such circumstances, above the dead level of ignorance and poverty into which he had been born. But Lincoln was possessed of a burning thirst for knowledge, and the education which his circumstances denied him he obtained by his own unaided efforts. He was determined to rise above the intellectual level of his associates, and how well he succeeded his whole life shows. His earnest and self-denying efforts finally gained him admission to the bar. He practiced as a lawyer for a number of years, early gaining a reputation for incorruptible honesty and wise judgment. Wherever he was known he was trusted and loved.

His tastes, however, led him to seek political preferment, and he was several times elected to the State Legislature, and once to Congress.

Upon the organization of the Republican party he became one of its leaders, and in 1860 was its nominee for the Presidency.

Bitter dissensions in the Democratic party brought about its defeat, and Lincoln was elected.

The secession of the Southern States followed, and when he was inaugurated as President he was confronted with a divided country and a Constitution defied.

The war which fo lowed was one of the most extensive and disastrous in history. Magnificent armies, made up of the finest soldiers in the world, contended with each other for four years for the supremacy of the American continent.

The immediate cause of the war was the attempt of the South to extend slavery into the newly settled States of the West. But in reality the war was a decisive conflict between two great and opposing principles of government — Nationalism and States' rights.

The North contended that the nation was supreme; that the union existing between the States was so close and vital that no one State could secede from the rest.

On the other hand, the South maintained that the State was sovereign, and that the union between the States was in the nature of a confederacy, which might at any time be dissolved, and from which any State had the right to withdraw.

The issue of the war decided forever that the United States was a nation and not a confederacy, and also that hereafter slavery should not exist on American soil.

The central figure of this, the darkest period of American history, was Abraham Lincoln. Towards him every eye was turned, in him every hope rested; and he never failed. His coolness, courage, and judgment never deserted him. For every emergency he was ready, and in the end he gained the victory and laid down his life upon the altar of his country.

His literary works were mainly in the form of speeches and state papers, many of which are models of simple style and vigorous thought. His education was exceedingly limited, yet few have excelled him in the clear and pointed expression of noble ideas.

Chronological Summary of the Leading Events in Lincoln's Life

He was born in Hardin County, Ky., Feb. 12, 1809.
Removed to Indiana 1816.
Removed to Macon County, Ill., 1830.
Became a clerk in a country store at New Salem, 1831.
Commenced studying law, 1832.
Elected to Legislature, 1834, 1836, 1838, 1840.
Admitted to the Bar, 1836.
Married Mary Todd, Nov. 4, 1842.
Elected to Congress as a Whig, 1847.
Republican party organized in Illinois, May 29, 1856.
Nominated for the Senate by Republican party, 1858.
Lincoln-Douglas debates, Aug. 21—Oct. 15, 1858.
Nominated for President, May 16, 1860.
Elected President, Nov. 7, 1860.
Inaugurated, March 4, 1861.
Issued Emancipation Proclamation, Jan. 1, 1863.
Re-elected, November 1864.
Assassinated, April 14, 1865.

Books for Reference

There is no collection of the works of Lincoln. His letters, speeches, proclamations, etc., are scattered through a wide range of publications. The Lincoln-Douglas debates were published in Cincinnati in 1859, but the book is now out of print. His messages to Congress and proclamations may be found in the Congressional Record, 1860–1865. McPherson's "Political History of the Rebellion" contains many of his official letters and orders that cannot be found elsewhere.

There are scores of biographies and some exceedingly interesting volumes of recollections, a few of which are mentioned below.

Nicolay and Hay's Life is a magnificent work in 10 vols., containing a complete history of the period. Arnold's Life is a standard work, interesting and reliable. "The Every-day Life of Lincoln," by Francis F. Browne, gives a better insight into his personality than perhaps any other. Herndon, Lincoln's law-partner, has written an extended sketch of his life previous to 1860, which contains much new matter. Other biographies may be found in the "American Statesmen Series" and in the "American Reformers Series." "Abraham Lincoln's Pen and Voice," by Van Buren, contains a partial collection of his most notable works. Chittenden's "Recollections of President Lincoln and his Administration" is exceedingly interesting, and sheds much light upon the inner workings of his administration. "Inside the White House," by Stoddard, is of interest, because it gives a good picture of the President's daily life.

THE WORDS OF LINCOLN

Early History

In speaking of his boyhood Lincoln once remarked:

My early history is perfectly characterized by a single line of Gray's Elegy:

"The short and simple annals of the poor."

At the request of a friend he wrote the following simple sketch of his early life:

I was born February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Va. My parents were born in Virginia, of undistinguishable families —second families, perhaps I should say. My mother, who died in my tenth year, was of a family of the name of Hanks, some of whom now reside in Adams and others in Macon Counties, Ill.

My paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, emigrated from Rockingham County, Va., to Kentucky, about 1781 or '82, where, a year or two later, he was killed by Indians, not in battle, but by stealth, when he was laboring to open a farm in the forest. His ancestors, who were Quakers, went to Virginia from Berks County, Pa. An effort to identify them with the New England family of the same name ended in nothing more than a similarity of Christian names in both families, such as Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Abraham, and the like.

My father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age, and he grew up literally without education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County,

Ind., in my eighth year. We reached our new home about the time the State came into the Union. It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools, so called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond "readin'," "writin'," and "cipherin'" to the Rule of Three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education.

Of course when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write, and cipher to the Rule of Three, but that was all. I have not been to school since. The little advance I now have upon this store of education I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.

I was raised to farm-work, which I continued till I was twenty-two. At twenty-one I came to Illinois, and passed the first year in Macon County. Then I got to New Salem, at that time in Sangamon, now in Menard, County, where I remained a year as a sort of clerk in a store. Then came the Black Hawk War,[1] and I was elected a captain of volunteers —a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since. I went through the campaign, ran for the Legislature the same year (1832), and was beaten—the only time I have ever been beaten by the people.[2] The next and three succeeding biennial elections I was elected to the Legislature. I was not a candidate afterwards. During this legislative period I had studied law, and removed to Springfield to practice it. In 1846 I was once elected to the Lower House of Congress, but was not a candidate for re-election.[3] From 1849 to 1854, both inclusive, practiced law more assiduously than ever before. Always a Whig in politics, and generally on the Whig electoral tickets,[4] making active canvasses. I was losing

1. An interesting account of his participation in this war may be found in "The Every-day Life of Lincoln," by Francis F. Browne.
2. Lincoln was a candidate for U. S. Senator in 1858 and was beaten. Does not this fact contradict the above statement?
3. Why was he not a candidate for re-election?
4. What were the principles of the Whig Party, and by what party was it opposed?

interest in politics, when the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused me again. What I have done since then is pretty well known.

If any personal description of me is thought desirable, it may be said, I am, in height, six feet four inches nearly; lean in flesh, weighing, on an average, one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected.

Yours very truly, A. LINCOLN

Addresses at Springfield

On the 27th of January, 1837, he gave an address before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield upon the "Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions." The address was a remarkable one. It began as follows:

In the great journal of things happening under the sun, we, the American people, find our account running under date of the nineteenth century of the Christian era. We find ourselves in the peaceful possession of the fairest portion of the earth, as regards extent of territory, fertility of soil, and salubrity of climate. We find ourselves under the government of a system of political institutions conducing more essentially to the ends of civil and religious liberty than any of which the history of former times tells us.

We, when mounting the stage of existence, found ourselves the legal inheritors of these fundamental blessings. We toiled not in the acquirement or establishment of them; they are a legacy bequeathed to us by a once hardy, brave, and patriotic but now lamented and departed race of ancestors.

Theirs was the task (and nobly they performed it) to possess themselves, and through themselves us, of this goodly land, and to rear upon its hills and valleys a political edifice of liberty and equal rights: 'tis ours only to transmit these—the former unprofaned by the foot of the invader, the latter undecayed by the lapse of time. This our duty to ourselves and to our posterity, and love for our species in general, imperatively requires us to perform.

How then shall we perform it? At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step across the ocean and crush us at a blow? Never. All the armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not, by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track upon the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years.[1]

At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reaches us, it must spring up among us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen we must live through all time, or die by suicide. . . .

Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country, and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of "seventy-six" did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and laws let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor; let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample upon the blood of his father, and to tear the charter of his own and his children's liberties. Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges. Let it be written in primers, in spelling-books, and in almanacs. Let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation.

In 1839 he delivered another remarkable address in Springfield, in the course of which occurs the following passage: [2]

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1. Is not this statement exaggerated?
2. This remarkable passage was quoted by Bishop Simpson in his oration at Lincoln's funeral.

Many free countries have lost their liberties, and ours may lose hers; but if she shall, be it my proudest boast, not that I was the last to desert, but that I never deserted her.

In referring to the bitter hostility and corruption of the slave power, he said:

Broken by it I too may be; bow to it I never will. The probability that we may fall in the struggle ought not to deter us from a cause that we deem to be just. It shall not deter me. If I ever feel the soul within me elevate and expand to those dimensions not wholly unworthy of its almighty Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country deserted by all the world beside, and I, standing up boldly and alone, hurling defiance at her victorious oppressors. And here, without contemplating consequences, before high Heaven and in the face of the whole world, I swear eternal fidelity to the just cause, as I deem it, of the land of my life, my liberty, and my love. And who that thinks with me will not fearlessly adopt the oath I take? Let none falter who thinks he is right, and we may succeed. But if, after all, we shall fail, be it so. We shall have the proud consolation of saying to our conscience and to the departed shade of our country's freedom, that the cause approved by our judgments and adored by our hearts in disaster, in chains, in torture, and in death, we never failed in defending.

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates

April 21, 1858, the Democratic State Convention met at Springfield, and after heartily indorsing the course of Senator Douglas, announced him as the candidate of the party for another Senatorial term.[1]

The career of Douglas was intimately connected with that of Lincoln. They were rivals in their profession and in politics, and finally were rival candidates for the Presidency. Stephen A. Douglas was a native of Vermont. In 1833 he emigrated to Illinois, at the age of twenty, feeble, friendless, and almost penni-

1. How are Senators elected? What was the reason for this unusual procedure? Would a change in the method of electing Senators be desirable?

less, seeking bread and a career in the great West. In his adopted State he rapidly rose to distinction. Success greeted his every effort, and glory and renown came at his bidding.

At the age of twenty-one he was admitted to the bar, where he made such rapid progress that a year later he stood at the head of his profession in his district. At the age of twenty-three he was a member of the State Legislature; at twenty-seven he was appointed Secretary of State in Illinois; at twenty-eight he became Judge in the Supreme Court. At thirty he was a Member of Congress. At thirty-two United States Senator, and recognized as the leader of the Democratic party. At forty-three he was a candidate for nomination to the Presidency. At forty-six he was nominated, but was defeated by an irreconcilable division in his party. In his forty-eighth year he died, in the prime of life, yet with a well-rounded career behind him.

In Congress he had become distinguished as the author of the Kansas-Nebraska bill,[1] and had succeeded in securing its passage by his brilliant oratory and plausible arguments.

This legislation concentrated the opposition to slavery in the North, and was one of the causes of the formation of the Republican party. In this political movement Lincoln was one of the leaders.

On June 16, 1858, the Republican State Convention met at Springfield and unanimously declared that "Abraham Lincoln is our first and only choice for United States Senator to fill the vacancy about to be created by the expiration of Judge Douglas' term of office."

Lincoln was invited to address the convention, and responded in an able and eloquent speech.

The opening paragraph excited much hostile criticism. It sounded the key-note of the conflict which was destined to be waged more and more bitterly until the pet institution of the South should be swept out of existence. It was as follows:

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION: [2] If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it. We are now

1. What were the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska bill? What was the Missouri Compromise?
2. Compare the opening paragraph of Webster's "Reply to Hayne."

far into the fifth year since a policy[1] was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved, I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.[2]

In the ensuing campaign Lincoln proposed to Douglas that they enter into a series of joint debates upon the great questions of the day. The offer was accepted, and they agreed to meet in joint discussion in seven different places, viz., Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, and Alton. The first debate was held August 21, and the last October 15.

These debates were widely read, and attracted the attention of the whole country. They rank among the greatest forensic discussions in the history of the world. A few short extracts from Lincoln's speeches follow.

My declarations upon this subject of negro slavery may be misrepresented, but cannot be misunderstood. I have said that I do not understand the Declaration[3] to mean that all men were created equal in all respects. They are not our equal in color; but I suppose that it does mean to declare that all men are equal in some respects: they are equal in their right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Certainly the negro is not our equal in color—perhaps not

1. What was this policy?
2. Before delivering this speech Lincoln read it to a number of his friends. At its conclusion one of them remarked: "Lincoln, deliver that speech as you read it and it will make you President." Did it? If so, why?
3. What declaration is referred to? When was it formulated, and under what circumstances? (It should be read in the class.)

in many other respects; still, in the right to put into his mouth the bread that his own hands have earned he is the equal of every other man, white or black. In pointing out that more has been given you, you cannot be justified in taking away the little which has been given him. All I ask for the negro is that, if you do not like him, you let him alone. If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy.

When our government was established we had the institution of slavery among us.[1] We were in a certain sense compelled to tolerate its existence.[2] It was a sort of necessity. We had gone through our struggle and secured our own independence. The framers of the Constitution found the institution of slavery amongst their other institutions at the time. They found that by an effort to eradicate it they might lose much of what they had already gained. They were obliged to bow to the necessity. They gave power to Congress to abolish the slave-trade at the end of twenty years. They also prohibited it in the Territories where it did not exist.[3] They did what they could, and yielded to necessity for the rest. I also yield to all which follows from this necessity.[4] What I would most desire would be the separation of the white and black races.

Henry Clay once said of a class of men who would repress all tendencies to liberty and ultimate emancipation, that they must, if they would do this, go back to the era of our independence and muzzle the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return; they must blow out the moral lights around us; they must penetrate the human soul and eradicate there the love of liberty; and then, and not until then, could they perpetuate slavery in this country! To my thinking, Judge Douglas is, by his example and vast influence, doing that very thing in this community when he says that the negro has nothing in the Declaration of Independence. Henry Clay plainly understood the contrary. Judge Douglas is going back to the era of our

1. When was slavery first introduced into America? What causes tended to develop it in the South?
2. Why?
3. Does this prohibition occur in the Constitution? If not, where is it found?
4. What is the significance of this statement?

Revolution, and to the extent of his ability muzzling the cannon which thunders its annual joyous return.

When he invites any people, willing to have slavery, to establish it, he is blowing out the moral lights around us. When he says he "cares not whether slavery is voted up or voted down"—that it is a sacred right of self-government—he is in my judgment penetrating the human soul, and eradicating the light of reason and the love of liberty in this American people.

And now I will only say that when, by all these means and appliances, Judge Douglas shall succeed in bringing public sentiment to an exact accordance with his own views—when these vast assemblages shall echo back all these sentiments—then it needs only the formality of the second Dred Scott decision,[1] which he indorses in advance, to make slavery alike lawful in all the States—old as well as new, North as well as South.

That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other is the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, "You work and toil and earn bread, and I will eat it." No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

The Cooper Institute Speech

After his debates with Mr. Douglas the attention of the country was attracted towards Mr. Lincoln. The people of the East desired to see and hear the man who had vanquished the most

1. What was this famous decision?

shrewd debater and the most skillful and adroit politician in Congress. Therefore an invitation was extended to him to give a political address in New York on the 27th of February, 1859, which he accepted. He was introduced to the audience by the illustrious poet William Cullen Bryant, and was greeted by an audience which taxed the capacity of the great hall to the uttermost.

The address was in the main historical, tracing in a masterly manner the political history of the country in its relation to slavery, and discussing the great questions at issue in a fair and friendly spirit. It was afterwards published in pamphlet form, with the following introductory statement by the publishers :

"No one who has not actually attempted to verify its details can understand the patient research and the historical labor which it embodies. The history of our earlier politics is scattered through numerous journals, statutes, pamphlets, and letters ; and these are defective in completeness and accuracy of statement, and in indexes and tables of contents. Neither can any one who has not traveled over this precise ground appreciate the accuracy of every trivial detail, or the self-denying impartiality with which Mr. Lincoln has turned from the testimony of 'the fathers' on the general question of slavery to present the single question which he discusses. From the first line to the last, from his premises to his conclusion, he travels with a swift unerring directness which no logician ever excelled. . . . A single easy simple sentence of plain Anglo-Saxon words contains a chapter of history that, in some instances, must have taken days of labor to verify, and must have cost the author months of investigation to acquire."

In this address he formulated the doctrines which were destined to be incorporated into the platform of the Republican party. He said :

A few words now to Republicans : It is exceedingly desirable that all parts of this great Confederacy shall be at peace and in harmony one with another. Let us Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion and ill-temper. Even though the Southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly

consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of our duty, we possibly can.

Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the National Territories, and to overrun us here in these Free States? If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty, fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong, vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man,—such as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care,—such as Union appeals, beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule and calling not the sinners but the righteous to repentance,—such as invocations of Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did. Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might; and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty, as we understand it.[1]

The Presidential Campaign

The Republican nominating convention was held in Chicago in an immense building called the "Wigwam," May 16, 1860. Delegates were present from all the Free States, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and Virginia, but the Gulf States were not represented. The leading candidates for the nomination were William H. Seward, of New York; Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois; Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio; Simon Cameron, of Pennsylvania; and Edward Bates, of Missouri. But it was soon evident that the contest would be between Seward and Lincoln.

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1. What was the condition of the South at the time this address was delivered?

On the first ballot Seward received 173½ votes to 102 for Lincoln. On the second ballot Seward received 184, and Lincoln 181. On the third ballot Lincoln received a majority, and his nomination was made unanimous.

This nomination was received with intense enthusiasm, not only in Chicago and Illinois, but throughout the Northwest.

Arnold, in his "Life of Lincoln," says :

"This Presidential campaign has had no parallel. The enthusiasm of the people was like a great conflagration, like a prairie fire before a wild tornado. A little more than twenty years had passed since Orrin Lovejoy, brother of Elijah Lovejoy,[1] on the bank of the Mississippi, kneeling on the turf not then green over the grave of the brother who had been killed for his fidelity to freedom, had sworn eternal war against slavery.

"From that time on, he and his associate abolitionists had gone forth preaching their crusade against oppression, with hearts of fire and tongues of lightning, and now the consummation was to be realized of a President elected on the distinct ground of opposition to the extension of slavery. For years the hatred of that institution had been growing and gathering force. Whittier, Bryant, Lowell, Longfellow, and others had written the lyrics of liberty ; the graphic pen of Mrs. Stowe in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' had painted the cruelties of the overseer and slaveholder, but the acts of the slaveholders themselves did more to promote the growth of antislavery than all other causes.

"The persecutions of the abolitionists in the South ; the harshness and cruelty attending the execution of the fugitive-slave laws ; the brutality of Brooks in knocking down, on the floor of the Senate, Charles Sumner, for words spoken in debate,—these and many other outrages had fired the hearts of the people of the Free States against this barbarous institution.

"Beecher, Phillips, Channing, Sumner, and Seward with their eloquence ; Chase with his logic ; Lincoln with his appeals to the principles of the Declaration of Independence and to the opinions of the founders of the Republic, his clear statements, his apt illustrations ; above all, his wise moderation—all had swelled the voice of the people, which found expression through the ballot-box, and

1. Elijah Lovejoy was shot by a mob at Alton on account of his abolition sentiments.

which declared that slavery should go no farther. It was now proclaimed that 'the further spread of slavery should be arrested, and it should be placed where the public mind should rest in the belief of its ultimate extinction.'"

There were four candidates: Lincoln, of the Republican party; Douglas and Breckenridge, of opposing wings of the Democratic party; and Bell, of the American party. Their votes were as follows:

Lincoln received a popular vote of 1,866,452 and an electoral vote of 180. Douglas received 1,375,157 popular votes and 12 electoral votes. Breckenridge received 847,953 popular votes and 72 electoral votes. Bell received 590,631 popular votes and 39 electoral votes.

Lincoln's Letter accepting the Nomination

SPRINGFIELD, ILL., May 23, 1860.

SIR: I accept the nomination tendered me by the convention over which you presided, of which I am formally apprised in a letter of yourself and others acting as a committee of the convention for that purpose.

The declaration of principles and sentiments which accompanies your letter meets my approval, and it shall be my care not to violate it or disregard it in any part. Imploring the assistance of Divine Providence, and with due regard to the views and feelings of all who were represented in the convention, to the rights of all the States and Territories and people of the nation, to the inviolability of the Constitution, and the perpetual union, harmony, and prosperity of all, I am most happy to co-operate for the practical success of the principles declared by the convention.

Your obliged friend and fellow-citizen,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Journey to Washington

On February 11, 1861, he started for Washington. At the station he was surrounded by his friends, who had assembled to bid him farewell. Just before the train started he addressed the following touching speech to them from the platform of the car:

FRIENDS: No one who has never been placed in a like position can understand my feeling at this hour, nor the oppressive sadness I feel at this parting.

For more than a quarter of a century I have lived among you, and during all that time I have received nothing but kindness at your hands. Here I have lived from my youth, until now I am an old man. Here the most sacred ties of earth were assumed. Here all my children were born; and here one of them lies buried. To you, dear friends, I owe all that I have, all that I am. All the strange, chequered past seems to crowd now upon my mind.

To-day I leave you. I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon Washington.[1] Unless the great God who assisted him shall be with and aid me, I must fail; but if the same omniscient mind and almighty arm that directed and protected him shall guide and support me, I shall not fail—I shall succeed.

Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now. To Him I commend you all. Permit me to ask, that, with equal security and faith, you will invoke His wisdom and guidance for me. With these few words I must leave you, for how long I know not. Friends, one and all, I must now bid you an affectionate farewell."

His journey to Washington had been so arranged that he would pass through many of the larger cities of the North. In each one he was cordially greeted, and his words were listened to attentively. At Philadelphia he had been invited to make an address in Independence Hall, "The Cradle of American Liberty."[2] He said:

You have kindly suggested to me that in my hands is the task of restoring peace to the present distracted condition of our country. I can say in return, sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in,

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1. Why was it more difficult? What were some of the difficulties which confronted him?
2. Why so called?

and were given to the world from, this hall. I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and framed and adopted that Declaration of Independence. I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the mother country, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men. This is a sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can the country be saved on this basis? If it can, I shall consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help save it. If it cannot be saved upon that principle, it would be truly awful. But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say, I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it.

First Inaugural Address

March 4, 1861

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES: In compliance with a custom as old as the Government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States to be taken by the President before he enters on the execution of his office.

I do not consider it necessary, at present, for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement. Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that, by the accession of a republican administration, their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never

been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches, when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists." I believe I have no lawful right to do so; and I have no inclination to do so. Those who nominated and elected me did so with the full knowledge that I had made this and made many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. * * * * *

I now reiterate these sentiments; and in doing so I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace, and security of no section are to be in anywise endangered by the now incoming administration.

I add, too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause,—as cheerfully to one section as to another. * * * * *

It is seventy-two years since the first inauguration of a President under our National Constitution. During that period fifteen different and very distinguished citizens have in succession administered the executive branch of the Government. They have conducted it through many perils, and generally with great success. Yet, with all this scope for precedent, I now enter upon the same task, for the brief constitutional term of four years, under great and peculiar difficulties.

A disruption of the Federal Union, heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted. I hold that in the contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution the union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution,

and the Union will endure forever, it being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

Again, if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of States in the nature of a contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it —break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it? Descending from these general principles, we find the proposition that in legal contemplation the Union is perpetual, confirmed by the history of the Union itself.

The Union is much older than the Constitution. It was formed, in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774. It was matured and continued in the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was further matured, and the faith of all the then Thirteen States expressly plighted and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of the Confederation, in 1778; and finally, in 1787, one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution was to form a more perfect Union. But if the destruction of the Union by one or by a part only of the States be lawfully possible, the Union is less perfect than before, the Constitution having lost the vital element of perpetuity.

It follows from these views that no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence within any State or States against the authority of the United States are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circumstances.

I therefore consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken, and, to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union shall be faithfully executed in all the States. Doing this, which I deem to be only a simple duty on my part, I shall perfectly perform it, so far as is practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American

people, shall withhold the requisition, or in some authoritative manner direct the contrary.

I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it will constitutionally defend and maintain itself.

In doing this there need be no bloodshed or violence, and there shall be none unless it is forced upon the national authority.

The power confided to me *will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government*, and collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere. * * * * *

Physically speaking, we cannot separate; we cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other, but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous or more satisfactory after the separation than before? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical questions as to terms of intercourse are again upon you.

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it. I cannot be ignorant of the fact that many worthy and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the National Constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendment, I fully recognize the full authority of the people over the whole subject, to be exercised in

either of the modes prescribed in the instrument itself, and I should, under existing circumstances, favor, than rather oppose, a fair opportunity being afforded the people to act upon it. * * * * *

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present differences is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with His eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people. By the frame of the government under which we live, this same people have wisely given their public servants but little power for mischief, and have with equal wisdom provided for the return of that little to their own hands at very short intervals. While the people retain their virtue and vigilance, no administration, by any extreme wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the government in the short space of four years.

My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and well upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time.

If there be an object to hurry any of you, in hot haste, to a step which you would never take deliberately, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it.

Such of you as are now dissatisfied still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and on the sensitive point, the laws of your own framing under it; while the new administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either.

If it were admitted that you who are dissatisfied hold the right side in the dispute, there is still no single reason for precipitate action. Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulties.

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not

in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you.

You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend" it.

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection.

The mystic cords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Extract from Lincoln's First Message[1] to Congress

A special session of Congress convened July 4, 1861, in obedience to the summons of the President. His message portrayed the situation of affairs, and described the steps already taken by the government to meet the emergency. In it the President referred to the difficulties and perplexities with which he was confronted, and made suggestions in regard to methods of overcoming them, as follows:

It may be affirmed, without extravagance, that the free institutions we enjoy have developed the powers and improved the condition of our whole people beyond any example in the world. Of this we now have a striking and an impressive illustration.

So large an army as the government now has on foot was never before known,—without a soldier in it but who had taken his place there of his own free choice. But more than this: there are many single regiments whose members, one and another, possess full practical knowledge of all the arts, sciences, professions, and whatever else, whether useful or

1. Who was the first President to send a written message to Congress? It was at first the custom for the President to address Congress, upon its assembling, in person.

elegant,[1] is known in the world; and there is scarcely one from which there could not be selected a President, a Cabinet, a Congress, and perhaps a court, abundantly competent to administer the government itself.

Nor do I say that this is not true also in the army of our late friends, now our adversaries, in this contest; but if it is so, so much better the reason why the government, which has conferred such benefits on both them and us, should not be broken up.

Whoever, in any section, proposes to abandon such a government, would do well to consider in deference to what principle it is that he does it, what better he is likely to get in its stead, whether the substitute will give or be intended to give so much of good to the people. There are some foreshadowings upon this question.

Our adversaries have adopted some declaration of independence, in which, unlike the good old one penned by Jefferson, they omit the words "all men are created equal." Why? They have adopted a temporary national constitution, in the preamble[2] of which, unlike our good old one signed by Washington, they omit "We, the people," and substitute "We, the deputies of the sovereign and independent States." Why? Why this deliberate pressing out of view the rights of men and the authority of the people?

This is essentially a people's contest. On the side of the Union it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men, to lift artificial weights from all shoulders, to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all, to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life.

Yielding to partial and temporary departures from necessity, this is the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend.[3]

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1. Distinguish between *useful* and *elegant*. What word could be more correctly used as the antithesis of *useful*?
2. Derivation and meaning?
3. Which of the words in this sentence are of Latin origin? If Anglo-

I am most happy to believe that the plain people understand and appreciate this. It is worthy of note that, while in this, the government's hour of trial large numbers of those in the army and navy who have been favored with the offices have resigned and proven false to the hand which pampered them, not one common soldier or common sailor is known to have deserted his flag.

Great honor is due to those officers who remained true, despite the example of their treacherous associates; but the greatest honor and most important fact of all is the unanimous firmness of the common soldiers and the common sailors. To the last man, so far as known, they have successfully resisted the traitorous efforts of those whose commands but an hour before they obeyed as absolute law. This is the patriotic instinct of plain people. They understand, without an argument, that the destroying the government which was made by Washington means no good to them.

Our popular government has often been called an experiment. Two points in it our people have already settled—the successful establishing and the successful administering of it. One still remains—its successful maintenance against a formidable internal attempt to overthrow it.

It is now for them to demonstrate to the world that those who can fairly carry an election can also suppress a rebellion; that ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly and constitutionally decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets; that there can be no successful appeal except to ballots themselves at succeeding elections. Such will be a great lesson of peace, teaching men that what they cannot take by an election, neither can they take it by war; teaching all the folly of being beginners of a war.

Lest there be some uneasiness in the minds of candid[1] men

Saxon words were substituted for the Latin words, how would the sentence differ in force and smoothness?

1. Derived from a Latin word meaning "white." What is its present meaning, and how derived? Cf. Candidate.

as to what is going to be the course of the government towards the Southern States after the rebellion shall have been suppressed, the Executive deems it proper to say, it will be his purpose then, as ever, to be guided by the Constitution and the laws; and that he will probably have no different understanding of the powers and duties of the Federal Government relatively to the rights of the States and the people, under the Constitution, than that expressed in the inaugural address.

He desires to preserve the government, that it may be administered for all as it was administered by the men who made it.

Loyal citizens everywhere have the right to claim this of their government, and the government has no right to withhold or neglect it. It is not perceived that, in giving it, there is any coercion, any conquest, or any subjugation,[1] in any just sense of those terms.

The Constitution provides, and all the States have accepted the provision, that "the United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government." But if a State may lawfully go out of the Union, having done so, it may also discard the republican form of government; so that to prevent its going it is an indispensable means to the end of maintaining the guarantee mentioned; and when an end is lawful and obligatory, the indispensable means to it are also lawful and obligatory. It was with the deepest regret that the Executive found the duty of employing the war power in defence of the government forced upon him. He could but perform this duty or surrender the existence of the government.

No compromise by public servants could in this case be a cure; not that compromises are not often proper, but that no popular government can long survive a marked precedent, that those who carry an election can only save the government from immediate destruction by giving up the main

1. To what is allusion here made?

point upon which the people gave the election. The people themselves, and not their servants, can safely reverse their own deliberate decisions.

As a private citizen the Executive[1] could not have consented that these institutions shall perish; much less could he in betrayal of so vast and so sacred a trust as these free people had confided to him. He felt that he had no moral right to shrink, nor even to count the chances of his own life, in what might follow. In full view of his great responsibility he has so far done what he has deemed his duty. You will now, according to your own judgment, do yours. He sincerely hopes that your views and your action may so accord with his as to assure all faithful citizens, who have been disturbed in their rights, of a certain and speedy restoration to them under the Constitution and the laws. And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with a pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.

Extract from Message of December 1862

The Necessity of National Union

A nation may be said to consist of its territory, its people, and its laws. The territory is the only part which is of certain duration. "One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever."

That portion of the earth's surface which is owned and inhabited by the people of the United States is well adapted to be the home of one national family, and it is not well adapted for two or more. Its vast extent and variety of climate and productions are of advantage in this age for one people, whatever they may have been in former ages. Steam, telegraphs, and intelligence have brought these to be an advantageous combination for one united people.

There is no line, straight or crooked, suitable for a national boundary upon which to divide. Trace through, from East to

1. Why does he speak of himself in the third person?

West, upon the line between the free and slave country, and we shall find a little more than one third of its length are rivers easy to be crossed, and populated, or soon to be populated, thickly on both sides; while nearly all its remaining length are merely surveyors' lines, over which people may walk back and forth without any consciousness of their presence. No part of this line can be made any more difficult to pass by writing it down on paper or parchment as a national boundary.

The fact of separation, if it comes, gives up on the part of the seceding section the fugitive-slave clause, along with all other constitutional obligations upon the section seceded from, while I should expect no treaty stipulations would ever be made to take its place.

But there is another difficulty. The great interior region, bounded east by the Alleghanies, north by the British dominions, west by the Rocky Mountains, and south by the line along which the culture of corn and cotton meets, and which includes part of Virginia, part of Tennessee, all of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Territories of Dakota, Nebraska, and a part of Colorado, already has above ten million people, and will have fifty million within fifty years, if not prevented by any political folly or mistake.

It contains more than one third of the territory owned by the United States, certainly more than one million square miles. One half as populous as Massachusetts already is, it would have more than seventy-five million people. A glance at the map shows that, territorially speaking, it is the great body of the Republic. The other ports are but marginal borders to it, the magnificent region sloping west from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific being the deepest and also the richest in undeveloped resources.

In the production of provisions, grains, grasses, and all which proceeds from them, this great interior region is naturally one of the most important in the world. Ascertain from statistics the small proportion of the region which has as yet been brought into cultivation, and also the large and rapidly-

increasing amount of its products, and we shall be overwhelmed with the magnitude of the prospects presented.

And yet this region has no sea-coast, touches no ocean anywhere. As part of one nation, its people may find, and may forever find, their way to Europe by New York, to South America and Africa by New Orleans, and to Asia by San Francisco. But separate our common country into two nations, as designed by the present rebellion, and every man of this great interior region is thereby cut off from some one or more of these outlets, not perhaps by a physical barrier, but by embarrassing and onerous trade regulations. * * * * *

I do not forget the gravity which should characterize a paper addressed to the Congress of the nation by the Chief Magistrate of the nation. Nor do I forget that some of you are my seniors, nor that many of you have more experience than I in the conduct of public affairs. Yet I trust that, in view of the great responsibility resting upon me, you will perceive no want of respect to yourselves in any undue earnestness I may seem to display. * * * * *

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is entirely new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed, this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful,

generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

Recommendation to Congress, March 6, 1862, in Regard to a Gradual and Compensated Emancipation[1]

I recommend the adoption of a joint resolution by your honorable bodies, which shall be substantially as follows:

Resolved, That the United States ought to co-operate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconvenience, both public and private, produced by such change of system.[2]

If the proposition in the resolution does not meet the approval of Congress and the country, there is the end; but if it does command such approval, I deem it important that the States and people immediately interested should be at once distinctly notified of the fact, so that they may begin to consider whether to accept or reject it.

The Federal would find its highest interest in such a measure as one of the most efficient means of self-preservation. The leaders of the existing insurrection entertain the hope that this government will ultimately be forced to acknowledge the independence of some part of the disaffected region, and that all the slave States north of such part will then say, "The Union for which we have struggled being already gone, we now choose to go with the southern section."

To deprive them of this hope substantially ends the rebellion; and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it, as to all of the States initiating it. The point is not that all the States tolerating slavery would very soon, if at all, initiate emancipation, but that while the offer is equally made to all, the more northern shall, by such initiation, make it certain to the more southern that in no event will the former ever join the latter in their proposed confederacy. I say

1. Compare this method of emancipation with that adopted by England and Russia.
2. Derivation and original meaning.

"initiation," because in my judgment gradual, and not sudden, emancipation is better for all. In the mere financial or pecuniary view, any member of Congress with the census tables and treasury reports before him can readily see for himself how very soon the current expenditures of this war would purchase at a fair valuation all the slaves in any named State. Such a proposition on the part of the general government sets up no claim of a right by Federal authority to interfere with slavery within State limits, referring, as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the State and its people immediately interested. It is proposed as a matter of perfectly free choice with them.

In the annual message last December I thought fit to say, "The Union must be preserved; and hence all indispensable means must be employed." I said this not hastily, but deliberately. War has been made, and continues to be an indispensable means to this end. A practical reacknowledgment of the national authority would render the war unnecessary, and it would at once cease. If, however, resistance continues, the war must also continue; and it is impossible to foresee all the incidents that may attend and all the ruin which may follow it. Such as may seem indispensable, or may obviously promise great efficiency toward ending the trouble must and will come. The proposition now made, though an offer only, I hope it may be esteemed no offense to ask whether the pecuniary consideration tendered would not be of more value to the States and private persons concerned than are the institution and property in it in the present state of affairs.

While it is true that the adoption of the proposed resolution would be merely initiatory, and not within itself a practical measure, it is recommended in the hope that it would soon lead to important practical results. In full view of my great responsibility to my God and to my country, I earnestly beg the attention of Congress and the people to the subject.[1]

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

1. Lincoln was fully pledged to this method of emancipation, and he exhausted every effort to carry it into effect, but without success. The South-

Lincoln's Policy

In the following letter, written in April 1864, Lincoln clearly states the causes which led to the emancipation of the slaves. When he became President he believed he had no right to interfere with slavery in the States in which it then existed. He was earnestly importuned by many zealous abolitionists to free the slaves at once ; but such an act would have been unconstitutional and revolutionary, unless sanctioned by military necessity. This he clearly recognized, and although his sympathies were with the slaves, he could not be induced to take the step until he became convinced that the preservation of the Union demanded it.

I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government, that nation, of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation and yet preserve the Constitution ?

By general law, life and limb must be protected, yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life, but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the Constitution if, to preserve slavery or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution altogether.

When, early in the war, General Fremont attempted military emancipation,[1] I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity.

When, a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity.

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ern States would listen to no friendly overtures, and it is perhaps better for the country that they did not. Slavery had become so firmly established upon American soil that to be destroyed it must be rooted out with violence. The President finally came to recognize this fact, and ceased his efforts for compensated emancipation.

1. In Missouri. What were the circumstances ?

When, still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come.

When in March, and May, and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the border States to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure.

They declined the proposition, and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it I hoped for greater gain than loss, but of this I was not entirely confident.

More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force, no loss by it anyhow or anywhere. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no caviling. We have the men, and we could not have had them without the measure.

And now let any Union man, who complains of this measure, test himself by writing down in one line that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms, and in the next that he is for taking three hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be best for the measure which he condemns. If he cannot face his case so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth.

In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity; I aim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party or any man devised or expected.

God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay

fairly for our complicity in that great wrong, impartial history will find therein new causes to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Lincoln himself gave the following account of the events which led to the issuing of the proclamation :

It had got to be midsummer, 1862. Things had gone on from bad to worse, until I felt that we had reached the end of our rope on the plan of operations we had been pursuing ; that we had about played our last card, and must change our tactics or lose the game. I now determined upon the adoption of the emancipation policy, and without consultation with or the knowledge of the Cabinet, I prepared the original draft of the proclamation, and, after much anxious thought, called a Cabinet meeting on the subject. This was the last of July or the first part of the month of August 1862. I said to the Cabinet that I had resolved upon this step, and had not called them together to ask their advice, but to lay the subject-matter of the proclamation before them, suggestions as to which would be in order after they had heard it read.

Various suggestions were offered. Secretary Chase wished the language stronger in reference to the arming of the blacks. Mr. Blair deprecated the policy on the ground that it would cost the administration the Fall elections. Nothing, however, was offered that I had not already fully anticipated and settled in my own mind, until Secretary Seward spoke. He said in substance : " Mr. President, I approve of the proclamation, but I question the expediency of its issue at this juncture. The depression of the public mind, consequent upon our repeated reverses, is so great, that I fear the effect of so important a step. It may be viewed as the last measure of an exhausted government, a cry for help ; the government stretching forth its hands to Ethiopia, instead of Ethiopia stretching forth her hands to the government."

His idea was that it would be considered our last shriek on the retreat. " Now," continued Mr. Seward, " while I approve of the measure, I suggest, sir, that you postpone its issue until you can give it to the country supported by military success,

instead of issuing it, as would be the case now, upon the greatest disasters of the war."

The wisdom of the view of the Secretary of State struck me with very great force. It was an aspect of the case that, in all my thought upon the subject, I had entirely overlooked. The result was, that I put the draft of the proclamation aside, waiting for a victory. From time to time I added or changed a line, touching it up here and there, anxiously watching the progress of events. Well, the next news we had was of Pope's disaster at Bull Run. Things looked darker than ever. Finally came the week of the battle of Antietam. I determined to wait no longer. The news came, I think, on Wednesday, that the advantage was on our side. I was then staying at the Soldiers' Home. Here I finished writing the second draft of the preliminary proclamation; came up on Saturday; called the Cabinet together to hear it, and it was published the following Monday.

Preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation

SEPT. 22, 1862.

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is or may be suspended or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave States so-called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which States may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent or

elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the governments existing there, will be continued.

That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Department of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the Executive will, on the first day of January, by proclamation aforesaid, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof respectively shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen thereto at election wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Speech at a Serenade in Honor of the Emancipation Proclamation

Sept. 24, 1862

FELLOW-CITIZENS: I appear before you to do little more than to acknowledge the courtesy you pay me, and to thank you for it. I have not been distinctly informed why it is on this occasion you appear to do me this honor, though I suppose it is because of the proclamation. I was about to say, I suppose I understand it. What I did I did after very full deliberation, and under a very heavy and solemn sense of responsibility. I can only trust in God I have made no mistake. I

shall make no attempt on this occasion to sustain what I have done or said by any comment. It is now for the country and the world to pass judgment upon it, and, may be, take action upon it. I will say no more upon this subject. In my position I am environed with difficulties. Yet they are scarcely so great as the difficulties of those who, upon the battlefield, are endeavoring to purchase with their blood and their lives the future happiness and prosperity of the country. Let us never forget them. On the fourteenth and seventeenth days of the present month there have been battles bravely, skillfully, and successfully fought. We do not yet know the particulars. Let us be sure that in giving praise to particular individuals we do no injustice to others. I only ask you at the conclusion of these few remarks to give three hearty cheers to all good and brave officers and men who fought these successful battles.

Final Proclamation of Emancipation

JANUARY 1, 1863.

Whereas, on the 22d day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they make for their actual freedom.

That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof respectively shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith

represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States ; "—

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority of, and government of, the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned, order, and designate, as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit : Arkansas ; Texas ; Louisiana, except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans ; Mississippi ; Alabama ; Florida ; Georgia ; South Carolina ; North Carolina ; and Virginia, except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be, free ; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free, to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that in all cases, when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In Testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my name and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By the PRESIDENT:
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State.*

Lincoln's Speech at the Dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg

November 15, 1863

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far

above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here ; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion ; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.

The Gettysburg address, though short, ranks as one of the greatest American classics, and as such it was recognized both at home and abroad. The *Westminster Review* said of it :

" It has but one equal—in that pronounced upon those who fell in the first year of the Peloponnesian war ; and in one respect it is superior to that great speech. It is not only more natural, fuller of feeling, more touching and pathetic, but we know with absolute certainty that it was really delivered. Nature here takes precedence of art—even though it be the art of Thucydides."

Proclamation

April 10, 1862

It has pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe signal victories to the land and naval forces engaged in suppressing an internal rebellion, and at the same time to avert from our country the dangers of foreign intervention and invasion.[1]

It is therefore recommended to the people of the United States, that at their next weekly assemblages in their accustomed places of public worship, which shall occur after the notice of this proclamation shall have been received, they especially acknowledge and render thanks to our Heavenly Father for these inestimable blessings ; that they then and there implore spiritual consolation in behalf of all those who have been brought into affliction by the casualties and calami-

1. To what is reference here made ?

ties of sedition and civil war; and that they reverently invoke the divine guidance for our national councils, to the end that they may speedily result in the restoration of peace, harmony, and unity throughout our borders, and hasten the establishment of fraternal relations among all the countries of the earth.

Proclamation

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, November 16, 1862.

The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine will, demand that Sunday labor in the army and navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity.

The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperilled, by the profanation of the day or the name of the Most High. "At the time of public distress," adopting the words of Washington, in 1776, "men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country, without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality."

The first general order issued by the "Father of his country," after the Declaration of Independence, indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded, and should ever be defended:

"The general hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country."

A. LINCOLN

Proclamation

July 15, 1863[1]

It has pleased Almighty God to hearken to the supplications and prayers of our afflicted people, and to vouchsafe to the army and navy of the United States, on the land and on the sea, victories so signal and so effective as to furnish reasonable grounds for augmented confidence that the Union of these States will be maintained, their Constitution preserved, and their peace and prosperity permanently secured; but these victories have been accorded not without sacrifice of life, limb, and liberty, incurred by brave, patriotic, and loyal citizens. Domestic affliction in every part of the country follows in the train of these fearful bereavements.

It is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father, and the power of His hand, equally in these triumphs and these sorrows.

Now, therefore, be it known that I do set apart Thursday, the 6th day of August next, to be observed as a day for national thanksgiving, praise, and prayer; and I invite the people of the United States to assemble on that occasion in their customary places of worship, and, in the form approved by their own conscience, render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things He has done in the nation's behalf, and invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion, to change the hearts of the insurgents, to guide the councils of the government with wisdom adequate to so great a national emergency, and to visit with tender care and consolation, throughout the length and breadth of our land, all those who, through the vicissitudes of marches, voyages, battles, and sieges, have been brought to suffer in mind, body, or estate, and, finally, to lead the whole nation, through paths of repentance[2] and submission to the Divine will, back to the perfect enjoyment of union and fraternal peace.

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1. What occasion called forth this proclamation?
2. Why does he summon the nation to repentance? To what extent was the North responsible for the evil of slavery?

Proclamation

October 3, 1863

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies.

To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that man is prone to forget the source from which they came, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unparalleled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to invite and provoke the aggressions of foreign States, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracting by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

The needful diversion of wealth and strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense has not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship.

The axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements; and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect a continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

No human council hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out, these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and voice, by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens, in every part of the

United States, and also those who are at sea, and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and prayer to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens; and I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity, and union.

Lincoln's Description of Grant to a Friend

March 1864

Well, I hardly know what to think of him. He is the quietest little fellow you ever saw. Why, he makes the least fuss of any man you ever knew. I believe two or three times he has been in this room a minute or so before I knew he was here. It's about so all around. The only evidence you have that he's in any place is that he makes things "git." Wherever he is he makes things move.

Grant is the first general I have had. He's a general. I'll tell you what I mean: You know how it's been with all the rest. As soon as I put a man in command of the army, he'd come to me with a plan of a campaign, and about as much as say, "Now, I don't believe I can do it, but if you say so, I'll try it on," and so put the responsibility of success or failure upon me. They all wanted me to be the general. Now, it isn't so with Grant. He hasn't told me what his plans are. I don't know and I don't want to know. I'm glad to find a man that can go ahead without me. You see, when any of the rest set out on a campaign, they'd look over matters and pick out some one thing they were in want of

and they knew I couldn't give them, and tell me they couldn't hope to win unless they had it; and it was the most generally cavalry.

Now when Grant took hold, I was waiting to see what his pet impossibility would be, and I reckoned it would be cavalry, as a matter of course, for we hadn't horses enough to mount what we had. There were fifteen thousand, or thereabouts, up near Harper's Ferry, and no horses to put them on.

Well, the other day Grant sends to me about those very men, just as I expected; but what he wanted to know was whether he should make infantry of them or discharge them. He doesn't ask impossibilities of me, and he's the first general I've had that didn't.[1]

Second Inaugural Address

March 4, 1865

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN: At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed very fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it; all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the

1. This is a good example of Lincoln's colloquial style. What are some of its elements and peculiarities? It is evidently not polished, but is it strong? Do you find in it anything indicative of the character of the man?

city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war: but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And war came. One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war, while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding.

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other.

It may seem strange that any man should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing his bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged.

The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes.

"Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh."

If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of these offenses, which in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him?

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in ; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans ; to bind up the nation's wounds ; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Origin of the Greenback

A letter written by Lincoln to Colonel E. D. Taylor, of Chicago, December, 1861

MY DEAR COLONEL: I have long determined to make public the origin of the greenback,[1] and tell the world that it is one of Dick Taylor's creations.

You have always been friendly to me, and when troublous times fell upon us, and my shoulders, though broad and willing, were weak, and myself surrounded by such circumstances and such people that I knew not whom to trust, then I said in my extremity, "I will send for Colonel Taylor ; he will know what to do."

I think it was in January, 1862, on or about the 16th, that I did so.

You came, and I said to you, "What can we do?" Said you, "Why, issue Treasury notes bearing no interest, printed

1. At the beginning of the war the funds in the National Treasury were nearly exhausted. Expenses exceeded the revenues and increased day by day, until it was found that some extraordinary measure must be adopted or the nation would become bankrupt. In this emergency Lincoln, and Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, determined upon the issue of a paper currency, which should be recognized as legal tender, and used in payment of the expenses of the war. This plan succeeded beyond the most sanguine hopes, and contributed in no small degree to the success of the National cause.

on the best banking paper. Issue enough to pay off the army expenses, and declare it legal tender."

Chase thought it a hazardous thing, but we finally accomplished it, and gave to the people of this Republic the greatest blessing they ever had—their own paper to pay their own debts.

It is due to you, the father of the present greenback, that the people should know it, and I take great pleasure in making it known. How many times have I laughed at you telling me plainly that I was too lazy to be anything but a lawyer.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN, *President.*

Capital and Labor

Extract from the First Annual Message

Upon the assembling of Congress in December, 1861, Lincoln presented his first annual message. The following passage discusses the relationship between labor and capital, and was suggested by the growing tendency to legislate in favor of the latter. The economical problems of society and government are the most complicated and difficult of all those with which a nation is compelled to deal. In view of the increasing importance of these questions this passage is significant.

It is not needed nor fitting here that a general argument should be made in favor of popular institutions; but there is one point, not so hackneyed[1] as most others, to which I ask a brief attention. It is the effort to put capital[2] on an equal footing with, if not above, labor in the structure of government.

It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital, that nobody labors unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow, by the use of it, induces him to labor. This assumed, it is next considered whether it is best that capital shall hire laborers, and thus induce them to work, by their own consent, or shall buy them and drive them to it without their consent.

1. Derived from a word which means a horse. What is its present meaning, and how derived?
2. Derivation and meaning?

Having proceeded so far, it is naturally concluded that all laborers are either hired laborers or what we call slaves.[1] And further, it is assumed that whoever is once a hired laborer is fixed in that condition for life.

Now, there is no such relation between capital and labor assumed; nor is there any such thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a laborer. Both these assumptions are false, and all inferences from them are groundless. Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.

Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between labor and capital, producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole labor of a community exists within that relation. A few men own capital, and those few avoid labor themselves, and, with their capital, hire or buy another few to labor for them.

A large majority belong to neither class—neither work for others nor have others working for them.[2] In most of the Southern States a majority of the whole people of all colors are neither slaves nor masters; while in the North a large majority are neither hirers nor hired. Men, with their families, work for themselves, on their farms, in their houses, and in their shops, taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand, nor of hired laborers or slaves on the other.

It is not forgotten that a considerable number of persons mingle their own labor with capital—that is, they labor with their own hands, and also buy or hire others to labor for them; but this is only a mixed, not a distinct, class. No principle stated is disturbed by the existence of this mixed class.

Again, as has already been said, there is not, of necessity, any such thing as a free hired laborer being fixed to that con-

1. What is the derivation of the word?
2. Is this statement true now?

dition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these States, a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him.

This is the just and generous and prosperous system, which opens the way to all, gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all.

No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take, or touch, aught which they have not honestly earned. Let them beware of surrendering a political power which they already possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to close the door of advancement against such as they, and to fix new disabilities and burdens upon them until all of liberty shall be lost.

The struggle of to-day is not altogether for to-day—it is for a vast future also. With a reliance upon Providence all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us.

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